

Wildflowers of Sonoma County



REGIONAL PARKS
SONOMA
COUNTY



Every spring, a variety of annual and perennial wildflowers bloom in Sonoma County's parks. This guide will help you identify some of the more common flowers. Parks known for their wildflower displays include Crane Creek, Foothill, North Sonoma Mountain, Sonoma Valley and Taylor Mountain, but you will notice certain flowers in almost every park. The flowers in this guide are organized by color, and more details can be found by clicking on the "More Information" link in each entry.

BLUE-ISH FLOWERS (Blue to Violet)



YELLOW-ISH FLOWERS (Yellow to Orange)



WHITISH FLOWERS



REDDISH FLOWERS (Rose to Red)



BLUE-ISH FLOWERS (Blue to Violet)



Baby blue eyes
Nemophila menziesii

March - June | Annual

More info 

This flower grows throughout California, with two varieties common in Sonoma County. *Nemophila menziesii* var. *atomaria* has white flowers with black dots, often with a faint blue tint or blue veins. *Nemophila menziesii* var. *menziesii* has bright blue flowers with white centers generally dotted with black (pictured.) Baby blue eyes are commonly grown as an ornamental flower in native plant or water conserving gardens.

BLUE-ISH FLOWERS (Blue to Violet)



Pacific hound's tongue

Cynoglossum grande / *Adelinia grande*

February - August | Perennial

More info 

This five-lobed flower ranges from pink-purple to deep blue with white centers. It is in the borage family. There are dozens of *Cynoglossum* species found throughout the world, but *C. grande* grows only west of the Cascades and Sierra. Hound's tongue prefers shady areas in woodlands and chaparral. It is similar to the invasive *Myosotis sylvatica* or forget-me-not.

BLUE-ISH FLOWERS (Blue to Violet)

Lupines

Lupinus spp.

March - October (*depending on variety*)

Perennial or Annual

More info 

Lupines grow throughout California. The compound leaflets of the flower structure make them easy to identify. They are usually purplish-blue, but some are yellow, such as the coastal bush lupine. Sky Lupine, pictured here, can grow up to 20 inches tall with blue flowers containing white or yellow spots. Some lupine is considered toxic if directly ingested.

BLUE-ISH FLOWERS (Blue to Violet)



Douglas iris

Iris douglasiana

February - June | Perennial

More info 

Douglas iris is usually a purplish-blue and occasionally white or yellow, with two or three flowers on each stem. It is most common in coastal grasslands. Douglas iris is regarded as a noxious weed in pastures because it forms clumps that inhibit other vegetation, and its leaves are unpalatable to cattle. It's known to be one of the most important sources of rope and basket-making fiber for Native American tribes in Northern California.

BLUE-ISH FLOWERS (Blue to Violet)



Blue dicks

Dichelostemma capitatum

February - April | Perennial

More info 

This is a long-stemmed flower in the lily family with a head-like cluster of blue, blue-purple or pink-purple blooms. It can be found at elevations from sea level to 7,500 feet. Blue dicks are often seen in burn areas due to their preference for open environments with an abundance of soil nutrients. The corms have traditionally been used in the diet of many Native American people in California.

BLUE-ISH FLOWERS (Blue to Violet)



Western blue-eyed grass

Sisyrinchium bellum

March - May | Perennial

More info 

This flower is in the iris family and is more commonly purple than blue, with grassy and tufted leaves. Blue-eyed grass often grows in open spaces where there is some moisture, but can be found in woodlands. The Coast Miwok and Ohlone people traditionally made tea from blue-eyed grass to treat stomach aches and reduce fever.

YELLOW-ISH FLOWERS (Yellow to Orange)



California buttercup

Ranunculus californicus

February - May | Perennial

More info 

This flower's native habitat extends to Baja California and some Pacific Coast islands. It can grow from 5 inches to more than 2 feet, with bright, glossy yellow petals and few leaves. *Ranunculus* is Latin for “little frog” and reflects the flowers' preference for wet habitats. The Miwok people traditionally used California buttercup seeds for food.

YELLOW-ISH FLOWERS (Yellow to Orange)



Sun cup

Taraxia ovata

February - April | Perennial

More info 

Sun cups have a wide rosette of four fleshy, feather-shaped or oval leaves, which are usually yellow but occasionally white with yellow spots. The stems are thin and erect. Sun cups are native to California's Coast Ranges and are often found in clay soil. Sun cups are in the evening primrose family and are also commonly called "goldeneggs."

YELLOW-ISH FLOWERS (Yellow to Orange)



Tidy tips

Layia platyglossa

February - May | Annual

More info 

Tidy tips are bright golden-yellow with distinct, sharp-margined white tips. This daisy-like flower is native to California's Coast Ranges and grows in meadows and grasslands. This flower is an important food source for the threatened Bay checkerspot butterfly, and the Ohlone people traditionally ate the seeds as pinole, a ground meal. Tidy tips are often found in commercial wildflower mixes.

YELLOW-ISH FLOWERS (Yellow to Orange)



Mule's ears

Wyethia spp.

March - June | Perennial

More info 

Two species of mule's ears — narrow-leaved (*Wyethia angustifolia*, pictured) and smooth-leaved (*Wyethia glabra*) — are found in Sonoma County. Part of the sunflower family, they have large flowers — 2 to 3 inches wide — relative to other wildflowers. Mule's ears are often spotted in sunny meadows and at the edges of woodlands.

YELLOW-ISH FLOWERS (Yellow to Orange)



Sticky monkey flower *or* Orange bush monkey flower

Diplacus aurantiacus

March - August | Perennial

More info 

California has many species of monkey flower in a variety of different colors, but this light-orange species is more common. It has deep, green, sticky leaves that protect against dessication and tubular flowers with five broad lobes. The Miwok and Pomo people traditionally used monkey flower for decoration and to treat minor ailments like sores, burns, diarrhea and eye irritation.

YELLOW-ISH FLOWERS (Yellow to Orange)



Fiddleneck
Amsinckia spp.

February - June | Annual

More info 

There are many species in the fiddleneck genus. They all look similar and are named for the many small flowers that curl up almost in the shape of the head of a fiddle. Two species in Sonoma County are the common fiddleneck (*Amsinckia menziessi*, pictured) and rancher's fiddleneck (*Amsinckia menziesii intermedia*.) Fiddleneck seeds and foliage are poisonous to cattle, and the plant's sharp hairs can irritate human skin. However, the shoots, seeds and leaves were used medicinally and for food by Native Americans.

YELLOW-ISH FLOWERS (Yellow to Orange)



California poppy
Eschscholzia californica

February - September
Perennial or Annual

More info 

Found throughout California, this flower was named the “Golden State” flower in 1903. Its solitary flowers grow on long stems with blue-green foliage. The four silky petals can range from orange to yellow and close at night and open in the morning. The leaves and roots of this flower are rumored to have a sedative effect.

WHITISH FLOWERS



Common yarrow

Achillea millefolium

April - August | Perennial

More info 

Found throughout North America and in nearly every California habitat, common yarrow is made up of large, white, compact clusters of fragrant flowers that produce abundant pollen for bees and butterflies. Yarrow is found in grasslands and forest openings and can grow up to 3 feet tall. Yarrow was used by the Miwok people as an analgesic and head cold remedy.

WHITISH FLOWERS



Woodland star
Lithophragma affine

March - May | Perennial

More info 

This flower, also called San Francisco woodland star and common woodland star, grows on a long stem with leaves divided into sharp-pointed lobes. The stem can have up to 15 widely spaced flowers with five bright-white petals divided into three toothlike lobes at the tips. It is found almost exclusively within California.

WHITISH FLOWERS



Milkmaids

Cardamine californica

February - April | Perennial

More info 

Also called bitter cress or California toothwort, this is one of the first wildflowers to bloom in the Bay Area each year. The flower has four white petals that close at sundown. The flower also nods its stem during rains to protect its pollen. Milkmaids grow in a variety of habitats, including shady slopes, grasslands, and open woodlands. Milkmaids were considered to be a first sign of spring by the Yurok people.

WHITISH FLOWERS

Fremont's deathcamas

Toxicoscordion fremontii

March - May | Perennial

More info 

Also called common star lily or star zigadene, this flower is usually found on grassy or woody slopes or rocky outcrops. Its spike of cream-colored flowers bloom from an underground bulb. Even though it is perennial, it does not bloom every year. The name “deathcamas” refers to a toxin found in all parts of the plant. Evidence suggests the Lewis and Clark expedition accidentally ate deathcamas bulbs ground into a bread, which halted the expedition while its members recovered.

REDDISH FLOWERS (Rose to Red)



Common vetch

Vicia sativa

February - June | Annual

More info 

Also called garden vetch, tare or simply vetch, this is a nitrogen-fixing leguminous plant in the pea family. Although it is non-native to California and considered a weed when found growing in cultivated fields, this hardy plant can be useful as green manure or livestock fodder. The pea-like flowers, which are often visited by bumblebees, are usually bright pink-purple but sometimes whitish or yellow. Vetch has been sown for fodder since ancient Roman times and has also long been part of the human diet, found in carbonised remains at early Neolithic sites in Syria, Turkey, Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia.

REDDISH FLOWERS (Rose to Red)



Henderson's shooting star

Primula hendersonii

February - April | Perennial

[More info](#) 

Also called “mosquito bill,” this flower can be magenta to deep-lavender to white. It is usually found in open woodlands and is sometimes grown in gardens as an ornamental flower. It is “buzz pollinated” by bees, which means bees grab onto the flower and move their flight muscles rapidly, causing the flower and anthers to vibrate, dislodging pollen. Only about 9 percent of flowers in the world are primarily pollinated this way.

REDDISH FLOWERS (Rose to Red)



Cow bag clover

Trifolium depauperatum

February - May | Annual

More info 

Named because it looks like an udder, this flower is also called dwarf sack clover and is native to western North America as well to western South America. The tiny, sack-like petals are pinkish-purple and sometimes have white tips. Cow bag clover grows in many types of habitat, including coastal prairies and mixed evergreen forests.

REDDISH FLOWERS (Rose to Red)



Red larkspur

Delphinium nudicaule

March - June | Perennial

[More info](#) 

The color blue is usually associated with larkspurs, but red larkspur (canyon larkspur or canyon delphinium) is one of the few red species. It is in the buttercup family and can grow from 1 to 6 feet tall. It has thin, long stems, and the flowers can be found in shades of red and orange. It is often pollinated by hummingbirds and has been used as a medicinal narcotic, primarily by the Yuki tribe.